

looking to curry favor with Azerbaijan by lifting or at least easing the ban on aid to Azerbaijan. And for the ban on aid to be lifted, Azerbaijan need only lift the blockades of Armenia and Karabagh. Until then, there should not be any consideration of asking the United States taxpayers to support the dictatorship in Baku.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly about this matter, and I think we need to seriously address the fact that this aid has not been coming to Nagorno Karabagh and that, hopefully, if we continue to tell the State Department that they are not doing their job in providing the assistance, they will do so forthwith.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN U.S.-INDIA
RELATIONS

Mr. PALLONE. Lastly, this evening, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity today to visit in New York with the President of India. Some of my other colleagues were there, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MANTON). Each of us had the opportunity to talk for some time with the President, and I wanted to comment on his historic visit to New York.

He was there to receive an award, I believe at a reception this evening; and he also spent some time at the United Nations. But he, in my conversations with the President, was very optimistic about what has been happening in terms of India and U.S. relations. And those of us who are members of the India caucus, again which I mentioned that I co-chair, are very pleased because we see more and more positive developments in terms of U.S.-India relations.

□ 1945

Just to mention a few things, just a few weeks ago, one of our former colleagues who is now the U.N. Ambassador, Bill Richardson, visited India along with Rick Inderfurth, who is the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, and also some other U.S. officials as part of the first delegation that the President sent to India since the new government was formed just about a month ago. And that trip I commented on last week was a very good trip because it really enhanced good feeling, if you will, between other two countries.

But one of the things that the President of India said today that was very good about the trip or that he appreciated about this trip by Bill Richardson was the fact that the U.S. representatives, including Ambassador Richardson, viewed India independently from the other South Asian countries. In other words, in the past, India has felt that U.S. foreign policy looks at India vis-a-vis Pakistan or vis-a-vis Bangladesh or some of its other South Asian neighbors and does not see it as its own country with its own place, if you will, an important place in world affairs. And that clearly has changed.

When Ambassador Bill Richardson went to India, he made it quite clear

that India is a priority of U.S. foreign policy, and it is a priority viewed independently, if you will, because of India's own status in world affairs.

Now, that is not to say that Ambassador Richardson and the others during this visit did not want to increase the dialogue between India and its neighbors in South Asia. Quite the contrary. They stressed during the trip, and the media reported the fact, that they stressed the need for India and Pakistan to resume their dialogue and try to improve their relations. And in fact, today when I spoke to the President of India, he was very optimistic that that indeed would happen, that sometime in the next few weeks or the next few months that the two Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan would meet at the Prime Minister level possibly, at the trade meeting of the SAARC group in July, or maybe even sooner than that, and that this dialogue between the two countries to try to reduce tension and bring not only Pakistan and India but all the countries of South Asia together again economically, politically and maybe even eventually militarily, that this dialogue would continue. So that was a very optimistic aspect of my conversation today with the President that I wanted to mention to my colleagues this evening.

The other thing that the President of India stressed at the meeting today was the need for U.S. support for India to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. Obviously, a big part of his trip today to New York related to the United Nations, and the United Nations is a focal point of India's efforts these days to become a permanent member of the Security Council.

Myself and a number of other members of our India caucus have, in fact, sponsored a House resolution where we express the sense of this Congress that India should be a permanent member of the Security Council, and we are hoping that eventually we can get that resolution passed, but we are also hopeful that the State Department will eventually come around to that point of view.

Again, the President of India was appreciative of the fact that the United States is pushing for an expanded Security Council, but he would like to see the U.S. directly support India's bid for a seat, as would I.

The last thing I wanted to mention in this regard is that when I spoke to India's President today, he was also very much of the vein, and I certainly agree, and I think it has been shown in the last 2 weeks as well, that the trade and business and investment relationship between our two countries, between India and the United States, is also going to move progressively forward.

There was some concern, I think, on the part of American businesspeople that with the new government, the BJP government as we call it, that they might not be as willing to move

forward to encourage U.S. investment and more trade or might put up some barriers to U.S. articles, certain U.S. materials or articles coming into India. But that has sort of been put to rest in the last 2 weeks.

India's Finance Minister was in Washington just a short time ago, and he made it quite clear that the new government wants to move forward in terms of U.S. investment, particularly in infrastructure, that the market reforms would continue, that privatization would continue. And I mentioned to the President of India today that this was very important to the United States, and he was of the opinion that we had nowhere to go but forward in terms of increasing our trade and business relationships.

So once again, I just wanted to say in conclusion this evening that what has been happening since the new government was elected in India in March has been very positive in terms of U.S. relations. I believe very strongly that the United States needs to think of India as a priority of its foreign policy and that we need to expand business and trade opportunities with India and basically have our countries work together in almost every area, whether it is political, diplomatic, economic, or even military. And I think we are clearly moving in that direction in terms of the developments that have taken place in the last month between our two countries.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3717, TO PROHIBIT THE EXPENDITURE OF FEDERAL FUNDS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF NEEDLES OR SYRINGES FOR THE HYPODERMIC INJECTION OF ILLEGAL DRUGS

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington (during the Special order of Mr. OWENS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-497) on the resolution (H. Res. 409) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3717) to prohibit the expenditure of Federal funds for the distribution of needles or syringes for the hypodermic injection of illegal drugs, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3546, THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 1998

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington (during the Special order of Mr. OWENS), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-498) on the resolution (H. Res. 410) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3546) to provide for a national dialogue on Social Security and to establish the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.